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Senate

The Senate met at 12 noon and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Gracious God of infinite goodness, confirm Your past mercies to us by empowering us to be faithful to Your commands. Help our lawmakers this day to use their understanding, affections, health, time, and talents to do what You desire. May they desire to please You with faithful service as You rule their hearts without a rival, guiding their thoughts, words, and works.

Lord, enable them to fulfill their duty to love You with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength. Take possession of their hearts, and order their steps by the power of Your loving providence. Pour down Your blessings upon our Senators that they may ever promote liberty and justice for all.

We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. FISCHER). Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business, with

leaders permitted to speak therein for up to 15 minutes.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the nomination of Elisabeth Prince DeVos to be Secretary of Education, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Elisabeth Prince DeVos, of Michigan, to be Secretary of Education.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

THE CABINET

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I rise this morning to speak directly to my friends on the other side of the aisle.

Now is the time to put country before party. I understand the pull of party loyalty. I understand deference to a new President. But from what we have seen in the first 2 weeks of this administration, party loyalty is demanding too much of my Republican colleagues on several issues. On the matter of the Cabinet, on the matter of the President's Executive order on immigration, and on the matter of dealing with Russia, we need Republicans to set aside partisan considerations in favor of doing what is best for the country; otherwise, our institutions of government, our Constitution, and our core American ideals may be eroded.

My friends on the other side of the aisle are going along with the Presi-

dent and treating many of these things as if they are normal, but America knows they are not. We need Republicans to start recognizing it, saying it, and stepping up to the plate to do something about it.

I understand my Republican colleagues will go along with the President 90 percent of the time, but there are certain issues that are too important that demand putting country above party. Now is the time to put country above party.

First, on the Cabinet, our norms of good government and above all ethics are being tested by a Cabinet unlike any other I have seen in my time in public office. There are so many billionaires with so many conflicts of interest and so little expertise in the issues they would oversee.

Take the nomination we are now considering: Betsy DeVos for Education Secretary. In my mind she is the least qualified nominee in a historically unqualified Cabinet. On conflicts of interest, she ranks among the worst. In her ethics agreement, which was delivered to the committee after the first hearing, it was revealed that she keeps interests in three family-owned trusts that have holdings in companies that could be affected by matters related to the Department of Education. Independent ethics watchdogs have criticized her ethics agreement for failing to deal with these conflicts of interest.

On philosophy of education, her views are extreme. She seems to constantly demean the main purpose of her job—public education. Nine out of 10 American kids attend public schools. Her views on public education are a major concern, particularly for Senators from rural areas. There is not a lot of choice of schools outside major metropolitan areas. If you don't have a good public school in your neighborhood or in your community, you have nothing. Any Senator from a rural State should be worried about her commitment to public education.

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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